

Multidimensional Role of NGO in the Management of Physical and Mental Health of Abandoned and Stray Animals-A Case study of People for Animal (PFA)

¹Caroline Audrey Kachiza, ²Emily Storm Nyamushure, ³Natashah Nyasha Rori , ⁴Shantel Kumbirai Sezere,

⁵Awtar Kishan Kaul

^{1,2,3,4}BSW V Semester

⁵Asst Professor (Department of Social Work)

^{1,2,3,4,5}Kalinga University, Naya Raipur (CG)

⁵awtar.kaul@kalingauniversity.ac.in

Abstract

In the colourful tapestry of India, amid its bustling streets and vibrant culture, lies a silent suffering that often goes unnoticed: the plight of abandoned animals. From stray dogs scavenging for food to injured cows left to roam aimlessly, the issue of abandoned animals is a multifaceted problem with far-reaching consequences. The problem of hapless abandoned animals in India stems from a combination of socio-economic factors and cultural beliefs. Rapid urbanization has led to the displacement of communities, resulting in pets being left behind or abandoned due to financial constraints or lack of awareness about responsible pet ownership. Furthermore, cultural practices such as the belief that feeding stray animals brings good karma often lead to overpopulation and neglect of such .This research article delves into the root causes, implications, and potential solutions to this pressing issue in India and presents a case study of People for Action (PFA) in the management of physical and Mental Health of Abandoned animals highlighting the role of NGO.

Keywords: NGO, Mental Health, People for Animals

Introduction

The problem of abandoned animals is significant and far-reaching, impacting both animal welfare and human society in various ways. Across the globe, including in countries like India, the issue persists and presents a complex set of challenges. Understanding the scale of this problem is crucial for implementing effective solutions and addressing its implications which has far reaching impact.

Abandoned and stray animals face numerous hardships and challenges. They often struggle to find sufficient food and clean water, making them vulnerable to malnutrition and dehydration. Without the warmth and safety of a home, they are exposed to harsh weather conditions, which can further deteriorate their health. Additionally, these animals are at higher risk of injuries, diseases, and encounters with vehicles or other dangerous situations.(Mohammed ,2023)

The consequences of abandoned animals are manifold and affect both the animals and society at large. Stray animals pose a risk to public health, spreading diseases such as rabies and creating safety hazards on roads. Moreover, the suffering endured by these animals, including starvation, disease, and abuse, reflects poorly on a society's compassion and moral values.

The magnitude of the problem

The magnitude of the problem of abandoned animals is vast and multifaceted, encompassing issues related to animal welfare, public health, environmental sustainability, and societal ethics. Addressing this complex problem requires comprehensive strategies that prioritize humane treatment, responsible pet ownership, and community engagement. By recognizing the scale of the problem and working collaboratively towards solutions, we can create a more compassionate and sustainable future for both humans and animals alike.

One of the most noticeable aspects of the abandoned animal issue is the sheer number of animals affected. Stray dogs, cats, and other domesticated animals populate streets, alleys, and urban areas, often in large numbers. This overpopulation not only exacerbates the problem but also increases the likelihood of disease transmission, conflict with humans, and competition for limited resources.

Abandoned animals are more susceptible to various health risks, including malnutrition, parasitic infestations, and infectious diseases. Without proper care and veterinary attention, these animals suffer from preventable illnesses and injuries, posing a threat to public health. Zoonotic diseases, which can be transmitted from animals to humans, are a particularly concerning aspect of the health risks associated with abandoned animals.

The presence of abandoned animals can have negative environmental consequences as well. For example, feral cats and dogs may disrupt local ecosystems by preying on native wildlife or contributing to the spread of invasive species. Moreover, their waste can pollute water sources and contribute to environmental degradation, further exacerbating ecological imbalances.

Municipalities and animal welfare organizations bear a significant economic burden in managing the consequences of abandoned animals. Resources are allocated to capturing, sheltering, and providing veterinary care for stray animals, diverting funds from other essential services. Additionally, the costs associated with addressing the public health implications of abandoned animals, such as disease control and sanitation measures, further strain limited resources.

The problem of abandoned animals raises important ethical questions about our responsibility towards sentient beings and the treatment of animals in society. The sight of neglected and suffering animals on the streets can evoke empathy and concern among citizens, prompting debates about the role of government, communities, and individuals in addressing animal welfare issues.

Furthermore, the presence of abandoned animals can contribute to social tensions and conflicts, particularly in urban areas where interactions between humans and animals are more frequent.

Beyond the tangible consequences, the problem of abandoned animals also has a psychological impact on both the animals themselves and the people who witness their suffering. Abandoned animals often experience stress, fear, and trauma, leading to behavioral problems and diminished quality of life. Moreover, the sight of neglected and mistreated animals can evoke feelings of sadness, helplessness, and guilt among compassionate individuals, highlighting the emotional toll of this issue.

Addressing the problem of abandoned animals in India requires a multifaceted approach that combines legislative measures, public awareness campaigns, and community involvement. Implementing and enforcing laws mandating the sterilization and vaccination of pets can help control the population of stray animals. Moreover, education campaigns aimed at promoting responsible pet ownership and dispelling cultural myths about stray animals can help change societal attitudes towards animal welfare.

Community engagement is also crucial in tackling this issue. Encouraging individuals to adopt pets from shelters rather than buying them from breeders can help reduce the demand for purebred animals and alleviate the burden on overcrowded shelters. Additionally, fostering a culture of compassion towards animals through initiatives such as feeding and caring for strays can foster empathy and understanding within communities.

Physical and Mental Health of Abandoned Animals-Serious Cause of Concern

The physical and mental health of abandoned animals are intricately intertwined, with neglect and mistreatment taking a toll on both aspects of their well-being. By recognizing the interconnectedness of these challenges and implementing comprehensive strategies to address them, we can improve the lives of abandoned animals and create a world where every animal is treated with the dignity and care they deserve. Through collective action and compassion, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of these vulnerable beings.

Abandoned animals, whether they roam the streets alone or languish in overcrowded shelters, face a myriad of challenges that impact both their physical and mental well-being. The neglect, abuse, and lack of proper care experienced by these animals have profound implications on their health, highlighting the urgent need for attention and intervention. This essay explores the interconnectedness of physical and mental health in abandoned animals, shedding light on the complexities of their plight.

One of the most immediate concerns for abandoned animals is their physical health. Without access to proper nutrition, shelter, and veterinary care, they are vulnerable to a host of ailments ranging from malnutrition and parasitic infestations to injuries and infectious diseases. Stray animals are particularly susceptible to injuries from accidents or conflicts with other animals, while those in shelters may suffer from overcrowding and unsanitary conditions that exacerbate health problems.

Furthermore, abandoned animals are often at risk of contracting zoonotic diseases, posing a threat to both animal and human populations. Diseases such as rabies, leptospirosis, and mange can spread rapidly among stray animals and potentially be transmitted to humans through bites or contact with contaminated surfaces, underscoring the public health implications of neglecting the health needs of abandoned animals.

In addition to the physical hardships they endure, abandoned animals also experience significant mental distress. The trauma of abandonment, coupled with the absence of socialization and companionship, can lead to profound psychological suffering. Many abandoned animals exhibit signs of fear, anxiety, and depression, manifesting in behaviors such as aggression, withdrawal, or self-harm.

Moreover, the constant struggle for survival in harsh environments takes a toll on the mental well-being of these animals, perpetuating a cycle of stress and despair. For animals confined to shelters, the lack of mental stimulation and enrichment further compounds their psychological distress, leading to behavioral problems and diminished quality of life.

Addressing the Dual Challenges

To improve the physical and mental health of abandoned animals, concerted efforts are needed at both individual and systemic levels. Providing access to basic necessities such as food, clean water, and shelter is paramount in addressing the immediate physical needs of abandoned animals. Veterinary care, including vaccinations, spaying/neutering, and treatment for injuries and illnesses, is essential for ensuring their long-term health and well-being.

Equally important is addressing the psychological needs of abandoned animals. Enrichment activities, such as socialization, play, and mental stimulation, can help alleviate stress and promote positive behaviours. Additionally, efforts to rehome abandoned animals into loving and caring environments can provide them with the companionship and security they need to heal from past traumas.

Furthermore, education and awareness campaigns are crucial in fostering a culture of responsible pet ownership and compassion towards animals. By raising awareness about the plight of abandoned animals and the importance of humane treatment, communities can work together to address the root causes of animal abandonment and create a more compassionate society.

Role of PFA

People for Animals (PFA) is one of the largest and most well-known non-profit organizations dedicated to animal welfare in India. Founded by Smt. Maneka Gandhi in 1992, PFA has played a significant role in advocating for the rights and welfare of animals across the country.

The history of People for Animals traces back to Maneka Gandhi's lifelong dedication to animal rights and environmental conservation. As a prominent politician, activist, and writer, Maneka Gandhi had been actively involved in various social causes, including environmental protection and animal welfare, long before the establishment of PFA.

The inspiration behind PFA stemmed from Gandhi's deep-rooted belief in the intrinsic value of all living beings and her commitment to alleviating the suffering of animals. Recognizing the urgent need for an organization dedicated solely to animal welfare in India, she founded PFA with the vision of creating a compassionate society where animals are treated with respect and dignity.

Since its inception, PFA has been at the forefront of numerous initiatives aimed at protecting animals from cruelty, exploitation, and neglect. The organization's work encompasses a wide range of activities, including rescue and rehabilitation of injured and abandoned animals, advocacy for animal-friendly legislation, awareness campaigns, and educational programs.

PFA operates through a network of chapters and shelters spread across various states in India, providing critical care and support to thousands of animals in need. The organization's shelters offer medical treatment, shelter, and nourishment to a diverse array of animals, including dogs, cats, cows, horses, and wildlife species.



(Team of Volunteers, professionally trained and certified Rescuers attending to an abandoned dog)

In addition to its direct rescue and rehabilitation efforts, PFA has been instrumental in influencing policy changes and legal reforms to improve animal welfare standards in India. Through lobbying, advocacy campaigns, and public outreach initiatives, PFA has worked tirelessly to raise awareness about animal rights issues and push for legislative measures to protect animals from cruelty and exploitation.

Over the years, PFA has garnered widespread recognition and support for its impactful work in the field of animal welfare. The organization's efforts have been lauded by animal lovers, activists, and policymakers alike, cementing its reputation as a leading voice for animals in India.

In conclusion, the history of People for Animals is a testament to the power of compassion, activism, and dedication in championing the cause of animal welfare. Through its tireless advocacy and hands-on initiatives, PFA continues to make a significant difference in the lives of countless animals, embodying the spirit of empathy and compassion towards all living beings.

Achievements

While People for Animals (PFA) primarily focuses on direct action and advocacy for animal welfare rather than producing statistical reports, its achievements can be measured in various ways, including the number of animals rescued and rehabilitated, legislative changes influenced, public awareness campaigns conducted, and the impact on communities and ecosystems. Here are some potential achievements of PFA in statistical terms:

Animal Rescues and Rehabilitation: PFA shelters and rescue teams may keep detailed records of the number and types of animals rescued, treated, and rehabilitated each year. These statistics can include the total number of animals rescued, species diversity (e.g., dogs, cats, cows, wildlife), medical treatments provided, and successful adoptions.

Spay/Neuter Programs: PFA may run spay/neuter programs to control animal populations and reduce the number of stray animals. Statistical measures for such programs may include the number of animals sterilized, the reduction in stray animal populations over time, and the impact on community health and safety.

Legislative Advocacy: PFA's advocacy efforts may result in changes to animal welfare laws and policies at local, state, or national levels. Achievements in this area can be quantified by tracking the number of bills supported or opposed by PFA, the number of laws enacted or amended, and the impact on animal welfare standards and enforcement.

Public Awareness Campaigns: PFA conducts educational programs and public awareness campaigns to promote responsible pet ownership, animal welfare, and environmental conservation. Statistical measures for these campaigns may include the number of outreach events held, the audience reached (e.g., number of participants, media coverage), and surveys to assess changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours related to animal welfare.

Community Engagement: PFA engages with local communities to address issues such as human-animal conflict, community health, and sustainable livelihoods. Statistical measures for community engagement initiatives may include the number of community partnerships established, the participation of volunteers and stakeholders, and the outcomes of community-based projects (e.g., improved animal care practices, reduced conflict between humans and animals).

Research and Documentation: PFA may conduct research studies and document case studies to assess the impact of its programs and advocate for evidence-based policies. Statistical measures for research and documentation efforts may include the number of studies conducted, the dissemination of research findings through publications or presentations, and the use of data to inform policy decisions and programmatic interventions.

While quantitative metrics provide valuable insights into the achievements of PFA, it's essential to recognize that the organization's impact extends beyond numbers. The compassionate care provided to individual animals, the empowerment of communities to advocate for animal welfare, and the broader cultural shift towards compassion and respect for all living beings are also significant achievements that may not be fully captured by statistical measures alone.

Key Issues and Challenges

People for Animals (PFA) faces various key issues and challenges in its mission to advocate for animal welfare and promote compassionate treatment of animals in India. These challenges encompass a wide range of factors, including legislative gaps, resource constraints, societal attitudes, and environmental pressures. Here are some key issues and challenges before PFA:

Legislative Gaps:

One of the primary challenges faced by PFA is the existence of legislative gaps and inadequate enforcement of existing animal welfare laws. Despite the presence of laws such as the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, there are often loopholes and inconsistencies in the legal framework, hindering effective protection of animals from cruelty and exploitation. PFA continues to advocate for stronger laws, stricter enforcement mechanisms, and harsher penalties for offenders.

Animal Cruelty and Abuse:

PFA confronts the pervasive issue of animal cruelty and abuse, including cases of deliberate cruelty, neglect, and mistreatment of animals across various sectors such as agriculture, entertainment, and pet ownership. Addressing instances of cruelty and abuse requires vigilant monitoring, prompt intervention, and legal action, which can be challenging due to limited resources and logistical constraints.

Overpopulation of Stray Animals:

The overpopulation of stray animals, particularly dogs and cats, presents a significant challenge for PFA. Stray animals face numerous risks, including starvation, disease, and conflict with humans, leading to public health concerns and safety hazards. PFA's efforts to address this issue through spay/neuter programs and community outreach face obstacles such as funding constraints, logistical challenges, and cultural attitudes towards stray animals.

Resource Constraints:

Like many non-profit organizations, PFA operates under resource constraints, including limited funding, staff, and infrastructure. Balancing the demand for services such as animal rescue, sheltering, and veterinary care with available resources can be a significant challenge, impacting the organization's ability to reach all animals in need and provide comprehensive support.

Public Awareness and Education:

Changing societal attitudes and promoting awareness about animal welfare issues are ongoing challenges for PFA. Despite efforts to raise awareness through educational programs, media campaigns, and community outreach, there remains a need to combat myths, misconceptions, and apathy towards animal welfare issues among the general public.

Human-Animal Conflict:

PFA grapples with human-animal conflict, particularly in urban areas where interactions between humans and animals are common. Conflicts arise due to factors such as habitat loss, encroachment, and competition for resources, leading to incidents of injury, property damage, and retaliation against animals. Addressing human-animal conflict requires a multi-stakeholder approach, including collaboration with government agencies, communities, and conservation organizations.

Environmental Pressures:

Environmental degradation and habitat loss pose additional challenges for PFA in its efforts to protect wildlife and natural ecosystems. Deforestation, urbanization, and industrial development threaten wildlife habitats and exacerbate human-animal conflict, creating challenges for conservation efforts and wildlife rehabilitation initiatives.

Conclusion

The problem of abandoned animals in India is a complex issue with deep-rooted causes and far-reaching implications. However, with concerted efforts from government agencies, non-profit organizations, and the general public, meaningful progress can be made towards alleviating the suffering of abandoned animals and creating a more compassionate society. By addressing the root causes of this issue and implementing sustainable solutions, India can pave the way towards a brighter future for its furry inhabitants.

People for Animals faces a diverse array of challenges in its mission to advocate for animal welfare and promote compassionate treatment of animals in India. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from stakeholders across sectors, including government agencies, civil society organizations, communities, and individuals committed to creating a more humane and sustainable future for animals.

References

1. Sethna, K. D. (1980), *The Problem of Aryan Origins (published 1992)*, ISBN 81-85179-67-0
2. Shaffer, Jim G. (1995), "Cultural tradition and Palaeoethnicity in South Asian Archaeology", in Erdosy, George (ed.), *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, Walter de Gruyter, ISBN 3-11-014447-6
3. Shaffer, Jim G. (1999), "Migration, Philology and South Asian Archaeology", in Bronkhorst, Johannes; Deshpande, Madhav (eds.), *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, Harvard University, Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, ISBN 1-888789-04-2
4. Mohammed Khamis (2023): "Unveiling the Plight: The Increasing Suffering of Stray Dogs and Cats Doi" <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/unveiling-plight-increasing-suffering-stray-dogs-cats-mohammed-khamis>